

Auto Makers Renew Passive Restraint Attack

Auto makers have attacked the Department of Transportation's latest proposal to require passive restraints, such as air bags, for front seat occupants in 1977 model cars. Recently, in two separate meetings, the presidents of both Ford and Chrysler met personally with Transportation Secretary Claude Brinegar and Safety Administrator James Gregory to discuss their views on the proposal.

General Motors, Ford, Chrysler and American Motors are seeking a further delay in making passive restraints standard on all cars. The manufacturers allege several reasons, including insufficient lead time, increased costs, inadequacy of the test dummy and lack of proven effectiveness of air bags.

Passive restraints (FMVSS 208) were originally to be required on 1973 model cars but U.S. auto makers, with the exception of GM, brought a lawsuit that succeeded in delaying adoption of the standard. (See *Status Report*, Vol. 9, No. 6, Mar. 26, 1974.) GM is the only auto maker presently offering air bags as an option on certain 1974 models.

There has not yet been a court challenge to the new proposal but there were hints in GM's comments that the company might bring a new lawsuit. GM said that the proposed requirements "in addition to being unreasonable, failing to meet the need for safety and not being stated in objective terms, . . . are neither demonstrably practicable nor appropriate for all vehicles." This language uses the terms of the 1966 Motor Vehicle Safety Act provisions that provide the legal basis for issuing motor vehicle safety standards.

Ford used similar language, adding that "any attempt to implement an effective date for passive restraint requirements in advance of the Administration's having developed genuine objective methods and devices for testing compliance would defy the clear holding of the Court" in the earlier case. Chrysler and American Motors also took this position.

Inside

- | | |
|--|---|
| ● GM Questions Air Bag Worth . . . Page 3 | ● Congress Considering Safety Bills . . . Page 8 |
| ● States To Get Penalty Hearings . . . Page 5 | ● 'Meat Axe' Hoods Get Reprieve . . . Page 10 |
| ● Reagan Once Supported Mandatory Helmets . . . Page 6 | ● NHTSA Plans VIN Reporting Evaluation . . . Page 10 |
| ● NHTSA Fuel System Rule Challenged . . . Page 6 | ● NTSB Recommends Changes In Buses, Bridges . . . Page 11 |

TEST DUMMY

Ford alleged that DOT has failed to develop a "fair and objective test method" because, it claims, none of the DOT materials indicates "that the specified test dummies have been adequately tested by NHTSA in vehicle compliance tests to allow rational determinations . . . as to comparability of results of compliance tests conducted by different agencies." American Motors said that "until the shortcomings [of the dummy] are corrected . . . rulemaking on a passive restraint standard must be stayed." Chrysler also cited dummy inadequacies.

GM, however, endorsed use of the dummy, which it developed, for "limited test modes" to "allow manufacturers to continue to provide air cushions as a restraint alternative."

During auto safety oversight hearings in March, Sen. Vance Hartke (D-Ind.) suggested that the 1966 Motor Vehicle Safety Act might be amended to relieve auto makers of the burden of certifying that their cars meet DOT's passive restraint requirements. Such a move would meet auto makers' needs for dummies which, they also claimed are not readily available. A Senate source told *Status Report* that Commerce Committee staff is looking at ways to "obviate the need for a dummy." One possibility is government certification that the systems provide the required protection, he said.

SMALL CARS

Ford claimed that "even less is known about the practicability and effectiveness of air bags in small cars" than is known about their performance in standard size cars. Ford admitted that it has done virtually no development work on air bags for small cars.

(Cont'd on page 4)

Senator Praises Industry Passive Restraint Support

The Chairman of the Senate Committee on Commerce has praised the insurance industry for its "particularly vigorous" support of the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration's passive restraint proposal. Sen. Warren Magnuson's (D-Wash.) remarks, along with *Status Report's* account of industry comments supporting the proposal, were printed in the June 4, 1974, *Congressional Record*.

To date, 11 insurance companies and each of the three industry trade associations have urged NHTSA to stand firm on its passive restraint proposal.

The National Association of Independent Insurers, representing more than 400 companies, has told NHTSA that research tests of the passive restraint system "by several organizations over a considerable length of time . . . seem to reflect the workability and the desirability of the passive restraint systems and the cost benefit advantages." Government Employees Insurance Co. (GEICO) and Liberty Mutual have also supported NHTSA's proposal. Both companies told NHTSA that they support the proposals but urged the agency to require lap belts in addition to passive restraints. Liberty Mutual added that "passive restraints, and particularly air cushions are more effective in preventing crash injuries than belt restraints, whether or not the use of belt restraints is required by law." (See *Status Report*, Vol. 9, No. 11, May 23, 1974, for other insurance industry comments.)

GM Claims Unrestrained Drivers Fare As Well

General Motors claimed, in its comments to NHTSA, that an “overall determination” of air bag effectiveness cannot be reached without more real world crashes of air bag equipped cars. However, GM claimed that its analysis of 23 such crashes showed that an *unrestrained* driver would have fared as well as an air bag restrained driver in almost all the crashes. The crashes cited by GM included the following in which an air bag was the only restraint for the front seat occupants:

- A 1972 Mercury crashed into the rear of a parked police car, penetrating almost five feet. At impact, the police car’s radar clocked the Mercury at 68 miles per hour. The Mercury’s driver sustained relatively minor injuries. GM claims that the probability of unrestrained driver injury in this crash was: None-Minor, 54 per cent; Moderate, 38 per cent; Severe-Serious, 8 per cent, and Critical-Fatal, 0 per cent.



- A 1973 Chevrolet veered out of control, became airborne as it crossed several railroad tracks, continued into a ditch when it landed, sheared off an eight inch thick wooden sign post and then impacted an 18 inch diameter wooden utility pole head-on at 30-40 miles per hour. The driver suffered a bruised nose and the only passenger, in the front seat, sustained no injuries. GM claims that the probability of unrestrained driver injury in this crash was: None-Minor, 50 per cent; Moderate, 30 per cent, Severe-Serious, 20 per cent, and Critical-Fatal, 0 per cent.



Photo Courtesy St. Louis Post-Dispatch

- A 1969 Chevrolet El Camino crashed head-on with an air bag equipped 1974 Buick Electra at an estimated closing speed of 80 miles per hour. The Buick’s front seat occupants sustained only minor injuries. The El Camino driver’s injuries included a fractured skull. His passenger’s injuries were severe enough to place her in an intensive care ward for a week. Both El Camino occupants were unrestrained.



GM claims that the probability of unrestrained driver injury in this crash was: None-Minor, 9 per cent; Moderate, 27 per cent; Severe-Serious, 55 per cent, and Critical-Fatal, 9 per cent.

GM said that its analysis was based in part on a computer scan of GM crash reports and in part on evaluations by an “expert jury” of GM engineers. Both the computer and the engineers picked crashes that were allegedly similar in severity to the air bag crashes and then compared the level of injury sustained by the drivers. GM used a similar method of analysis in an earlier study that, it claimed, illustrated lap and shoulder belts are more effective than air bags. The analysis was challenged by Allstate Insurance Co., in part, because of its reliance on the subjective opinions of GM employees. (See *Status Report*, Vol. 8, No. 16, Aug. 13, 1973.)

(Cont'd from page 2)

"Even if suitable air bags can be developed for use in small cars, making the necessary structural modifications would reduce the size and weight benefits owners of smaller cars now enjoy," the company claimed. GM said its own laboratory testing and that of NHTSA contractors has shown that air bag systems are not yet ready for use in sub compact cars.

(A December, 1973, study by one DOT contractor, Agbabian Associates, has reported that vehicles as small as the Ford Pinto can "consistently satisfy the requirements of FMVSS 208." See *Status Report*, Vol. 9, No. 7, April 9, 1974.)

Other comments to the docket, submitted by foreign auto makers, also claimed problems with small cars. The Japan Automobile Manufacturers Association cited "further problems such as energy management (due to shortage of crush distance)" and "sensing time (due to narrow space)," as reasons to delay the introduction of passive restraints on small cars.

Volkswagen said that its new passive belt system, which will be available on some 1975 model cars, is not suitable for a "new line of vehicles with low seating position that Volkswagen will introduce" and that its component suppliers could not supply air bags for those cars in time to meet the 1976 deadline.

An American insurance company and a European car manufacturer have agreed to fleet test 75 air bag equipped smaller cars. Allstate Insurance Co. and Volvo have announced that 75 Volvo 1975 model sedans will be added to the Allstate air bag fleet. Allstate already has 450 air bag equipped cars produced by Ford and General Motors. Volvo is the first company to offer air bag equipped smaller cars for fleet testing.

COST

Chrysler said that "at this stage of development, we do not believe air bags are in the public interest . . . [and] a commitment to air bags would be a costly mistake for the nation." GM, asserting costs would outweigh benefits, estimated the cost of front seat air bags plus the lap belts and sequential warning system, required only if the car cannot otherwise meet the rollover test, would result in "a \$2.6 billion annual increase in cost on a national basis assuming a 10 million car year." Chrysler considered GM's present air bag option price of \$225 too low and supported an earlier \$335 Ford estimate. Ford now claims the cost would be "\$245 over and above the present cost per car of 1974 restraint systems."

LEAD TIME

Chrysler warned, "If the government insists on an air bag standard, Chrysler could not meet it by the 1977 model year." With "an all-out crash program" the company said it might be able to introduce air bags "during the 1979 model year at the earliest." GM asserted that "further development work" is still necessary for most cars and after that at least 30 months tooling and facility lead time. In August last year, GM President Edward N. Cole said the company would need a lead time in the neighborhood of 15-18 months. (See *Status Report*, Vol. 8, No. 19, Oct. 17, 1973.) Ford and AMC estimated about 36 months from the issue of the final rule.

LAP AND SHOULDER BELTS

All the companies asserted that the proposal is, as Ford said, "premature" because not enough is known about air bags. Ford has produced only a small number of air bag equipped fleet cars. Chrysler and

Passive Restraint Cost-Benefit Study Due

Status Report has learned that NHTSA is making public its own benefit study of passive restraints. Details of that analysis will appear in a future issue.

AMC have not produced any cars equipped with a passive restraint. GM has produced over 3,000 air bag equipped fleet cars. GM's proposed production of 50,000 air bag equipped 1974 full size cars was cut when the energy shortage affected sales; only a few hundred have been sold so far.

The manufacturers said that lap and shoulder belt combinations can offer equal if not better protection than air bags. They claimed that ignition interlocks on 1974 model cars have tripled usage rates. Ford cited a wearing rate of "approximately 60 per cent" on its 1974 model cars according to its own studies. (An IIHS study in three cities found significantly lower usage rates, around 45 per cent, on Ford cars. See *Status Report*, Vol. 9, No. 6, March 26, 1974.)

Ford and American Motors both told the agency that they expect the usage rate of lap and shoulder belts with ignition interlocks to increase even more. Ford said that as people become "accustomed to the act of wearing belts, resistance will slacken and usage will increase." Ford, which introduced lap belts almost 20 years ago, added that it is "actively engaged at present in programs to improve the convenience of belt systems."

A passive belt system, which has recently been adopted by Volkswagen for use in 1975 model cars, is not considered practicable by the U.S. auto makers, especially for use with 3-person front seats.

Almost all the manufacturers claimed that the passage of safety belt usage laws is likely in the near future and would further decrease the need for passive restraints. Puerto Rico is at present the only U.S. jurisdiction with such a law. Belt usage laws have been introduced in more than 20 states during the past two years but none has been adopted.

DOT Moves Closer To Penalty Showdown

The Department of Transportation has moved one step closer to imposing financial penalties on states that fail to enact federally required highway loss reduction measures.

In a rule issued jointly by the Federal Highway Administration and the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, states have been told that they will have a "public hearing for presentation of evidence and views . . . concerning the deficiencies" in their highway loss reduction program before any penalties are invoked. Other interested parties will also have a chance to present views at the hearing.

The Highway Safety Act of 1966 gives the Secretary of Transportation authority to withhold funds whenever, in his opinion, a state fails to make satisfactory progress in its loss reduction program. So far, in the agency's eight year history, the penalty sanctions have not been employed.

The procedure that DOT now says it will follow in determining whether funds should be withheld will be initiated by a joint FHWA-NHTSA announcement whenever the agencies "find a situation warranting initiation of sanction proceedings." At that point a letter will be sent to the state detailing the proposed penalties, outlining the state's program deficiencies and setting a date for a public hearing.

The procedures allow for pre-hearing settlement of the dispute. But lacking a pre-hearing settlement, a public hearing will be held. The record of that hearing will be the basis for deciding whether

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Reagan Once Supported Helmet Laws

California's Governor Ronald Reagan, who now strongly opposes mandatory use of motorcycle helmets, once favored requiring their use.

In December, 1970, Reagan wrote then Transportation Secretary John Volpe that, "I share your concern about the lack of such a law here in California and have in past sessions supported a bill requiring mandatory wearing of helmets by motorcyclists."

A spokesman in Gov. Reagan's press office told *Status Report* "apparently he's changed his position on that." Another California state official said he didn't know "when he changed his mind or why, but he's been rather adamant on it recently."

or not to withhold funds from a state, DOT says. Each step in the process will be announced and outlined in the *Federal Register*.

California, Iowa, Maryland and Nebraska have each failed to enact highway loss reduction laws that DOT says are essential. California, Iowa and Nebraska lack laws requiring motorcyclists to wear helmets. Nebraska also lacks adequate training for ambulance attendants, DOT says. Maryland's difficulty arises over its law that describes a driver with a 0.10 blood alcohol concentration as "impaired." DOT requires that a driver with such a concentration be defined as "intoxicated." (See *Status Report*, Vol. 9, No. 9, May 1, 1974.)

DOT gave those states until the end of their 1974 legislative sessions to enact the prescribed measures or face loss of ten per cent of their federal highway construction funds and all of their federal highway safety money. California is the only one of the four states whose legislature remains in session. Technically, the state has until the end of the calendar year, when its legislature adjourns, to pass a mandatory motorcycle helmet law. However, state officials, including Gov. Ronald Reagan, have taken hardline positions against the measure.

NHTSA Fuel System Rule Meets Stiff Opposition

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration faces a court challenge of its new fuel system crashworthiness standard. In addition, eleven manufacturers have filed formal petitions with the agency seeking to lessen the standard's crash test requirements and, in some cases, to delay the standard for up to two years.

American Motors has asked the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Sixth Circuit to review NHTSA's fuel system rulemaking. After reviewing NHTSA's passive restraint standard (FMVSS 208), the same court, in December, 1972, remanded the standard to the agency for further consideration. (NHTSA has just recently issued its proposed revision of the passive restraint standard.)

The new standard, issued in March of this year, requires the fuel systems of all motor vehicles 10,000 pounds or less to withstand front-angular, lateral moving and rear moving barrier crashes, each crash

being followed by a rollover test. The standard, which would be phased in beginning with the 1975 model year, also specifies the amount and rate of allowable fuel spillage following each crash test. (See *Status Report* Vol. 9, No. 8, April 16, 1974.)

The numerous challenges to NHTSA's action, in the form of petitions for reconsideration, seek major test requirement revision and effective data postponements. Volkswagen claimed that because of the "nebulous character" of the new standard's benefits, NHTSA should reconsider the need for the rollover, front-angular and lateral moving barrier crash tests. However, NHTSA should consider retaining the rear moving barrier crash test, Volkswagen said, because "the importance of rear end impacts as a cause of fire in passenger cars is reflected in the crash tests conducted by the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety."

(In one of the Institute's test when a 1973 Volkswagen Beetle impacted the rear of a parked 1973 Plymouth Fury III at 38.8 miles per hour, the Plymouth's fuel tank spewed gas. The front mounted VW gas tank survived the crash with no detectable fuel spillage. After the subsequently ignited fire, which engulfed both the Fury and the VW and burned for more than two minutes, the VW still had no leaks in its entire fuel system. See *Status Report* Vol. 8, No. 11, May 29, 1973.)

Other manufacturer requests for changes in the standard include:

- a two year delay in the front-angular, rear moving and lateral moving barrier crash tests, requested by American Motors; Toyota also asked for a similar delay in the front-angular barrier test;

Army Reports 'Dramatic Success' In Curbing Fire Deaths

The Army has reported "dramatic success" in eliminating postcrash fire fatalities and injuries in helicopters equipped with a new crashworthy fuel system.

In a four year period, there have been no fatalities or injuries from fire in 776 crashes of army helicopters equipped with the new fuel system, reports a recent army study. During the same period, there were 101 fire fatalities and 86 burn injuries in 960 crashes of helicopters that did not have the new fuel system. The few postcrash fires that have occurred with the new system have been "small localized fires" that allowed time for the helicopter's occupants to "escape or be rescued," the study reported.

"Small penalties in weight and cost" of the new system "were deemed acceptable in view of the importance of nullifying the deleterious effects of postcrash fires," the study said.

Based on the effectiveness of the new system, which incorporates impact resistant fuel cells, breakaway fuel lines and automatic fuel shutoff valves, the Army plans to equip virtually all of its rotary and fixed wing aircraft with the system by 1985.

Copies of the study, "Summary of US Army Crashworthy Fuel Systems Accident Experience From April 1970 to April 1974" by Lt. Col. W. F. Gabella and Cpt. Wade Young can be obtained at \$1.50 per copy by writing to: Publications Department, National Fire Protection Association, 470 Atlantic Ave., Boston, Mass. 02210 and requesting Aviation Bulletin number 412.

- a one year delay, again sought by American Motors, of the static rollover test;
- exemption of station wagons and hatch-backs from the rear moving barrier test, asked for by Toyota. Toyota said that the under the floor location of the fuel tank in those vehicles made the rear end crash test "too stringent to satisfy."

Nearly all the petitioners, including Ford, General Motors, Chrysler, Renault and Peugeot, asked NHTSA to delete the requirement that the test dummies used in the crash test be protected by passive restraints. Several manufacturers observed that the new fuel system standard will be effective Sept. 1, 1975, while, under the current NHTSA proposal, passive restraints will not be required until Sept. 1, 1976.

Congress Considering Motor Vehicle Safety Bills

The Congress is slowly moving toward completion of the first major revision of the National Traffic and Motor Vehicle Safety Act since its passage in 1966. Proposals being considered include mandatory recall and repair of defective vehicles and tires, stricter fuel system crashworthiness requirements for vehicles and a possible prohibition of ignition interlocks in seatbelt systems.

In addition to the substantive changes proposed for the 1966 Act, the pending House bill contains fiscal year 1975-77 authorizations for the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration's motor vehicle programs.

Early last year the Senate completed action on proposed amendments (S. 355) to the 1966 Motor Vehicle Safety Act. The House Commerce Committee has recently reported out its own version of the legislation (H.R. 5529). The full House is not expected to act on the bill until late June. Differences between the two bills would then have to be ironed out in a House-Senate conference committee before the legislation could be sent to the President for his approval.

MANDATORY RECALL

Both bills would require motor vehicle and tire manufacturers to recall and repair, in most instances at no charge to the consumer, their products with safety-related defects. (With a few notable exceptions, such as General Motors' refusal to pay for the repair of defective heaters in 760,000 Corvairs, manufacturers generally do so now on a voluntary basis.)

If a manufacturer failed to adequately repair a defective vehicle, both bills would allow consumers to receive, at the manufacturer's option, either a refund of the vehicle purchase price, less depreciation, or a new or equivalent replacement vehicle.

STRONGER FUEL SYSTEMS

A provision, introduced by Rep. John E. Moss (D-Cal.), in the House bill had sought to force the Department of Transportation to establish new fuel system crash test requirements for 1976 model year vehicles. The House Commerce Committee cut the crash test requirements from the bill, but retained a provision that requires DOT to establish a new fuel system standard for 1975 model vehicles. (DOT has already issued a new standard, but it is to be phased in with 1976 model year vehicles.) It is expected that Moss will attempt to reinstate the 1976 model year fuel system crash test requirements when the bill is considered by the House.

NO SAFETY ALTERATIONS

The House bill would prohibit manufacturers, dealers or repair shops from altering safety-related equipment on new and used motor vehicles. Similar legislation has been introduced but not acted on in the Senate. Current law only forbids a manufacturer or dealer from modifying safety features on new, unsold vehicles.

CURB ON INTERLOCKS

The House Commerce Committee also adopted a provision, sponsored by Rep. John Dingell (D-Mich.), to allow consumers to choose between having a safety belt ignition interlock or having only a belt warning buzzer in 1975 and later model year vehicles. An NHTSA official told *Status Report* that the agency expects an attempt to be made during the House floor debate to ban interlocks altogether. (IIHS research has found no difference in belt usage in cars with and without belt warning buzzers. See *Status Report*, Vol. 7, No. 17, Sept. 18, 1972.)

AUTHORIZATIONS

The House bill would substantially increase the amount of money NHTSA would be authorized to seek during the appropriation process for the next three fiscal years. The bill would allow \$55 million for fiscal 1975, \$60 million for fiscal 1976 and \$65 million for fiscal 1977.

Generally the amount the Congress appropriates is less than what it previously authorizes. For fiscal 1974, the Congress authorized NHTSA to ask for a \$46 million appropriation for motor vehicle safety programs. NHTSA subsequently requested \$35 million and the Congress finally appropriated \$30 million.

Also contained in the House, but not the Senate, bill is a requirement that manufacturers challenging federal safety standards on cost grounds provide data to support their claims, which would then be available to the public. Other provisions of the House bill would increase the maximum civil penalty for violation of the Act from \$400,000 to \$800,000, and require DOT to establish new school bus safety standards.

Motorcycle Injury Costs 'Absolutely Staggering'

The cost of treating naval personnel for motorcycle injuries is "absolutely staggering," according to *Lifeline*, a naval safety journal.

A recent issue of the journal says that one naval hospital "reports that during the period February-July 1973, the taxpayer paid over \$187,000 to medically treat navymen injured while riding two-wheel motor vehicles. This cost does not include the loss of services to the men's parent units

"Based on the Portsmouth report, it's reasonable to believe that other naval hospitals would show comparable losses. On a yearly basis this would make the overall dollar loss absolutely staggering," the journal said.

Delay For 'Meat Axe' Hood Rule

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration has proposed a delay for its safety standard – already one year overdue – to prevent vehicle hoods from penetrating windshields in a crash.

Almost two years ago, NHTSA first proposed rulemaking to prohibit hood penetration in a 30 mile per hour frontal barrier crash. The rule was to take effect with 1974 model year passenger cars and 1975 model year multipurpose passenger vehicles, trucks and buses weighing 10,000 pounds or less. (See *Status Report*, Vol. 7, No. 16, Sept. 5, 1972.)

In response to comments from auto makers, NHTSA now proposes to modify the requirements of the standard and to delay its application until the 1976 model year for passenger cars and the 1977 model year for other vehicles.

Several manufacturers objected to the requirement that no vehicle part, including glass particles and paint chips, penetrate a specified "protected zone" front of the windshield. Now NHTSA proposes to allow intrusions into that protected zone that do not penetrate more than one-fourth of an inch into styrofoam mounted in it. In addition, vehicle parts may contact, but not penetrate the lower edge of the windshield – an area which is not "susceptible to occupant contact," NHTSA claimed.

In November, 1971, the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety told NHTSA that during its medium speed head-on crash test between a 1971 Chevrolet Impala and Chevrolet Vega, the Vega's hood sliced through its windshield "like a horizontal meat cleaver." (See *Status Report*, Vol. 6, No. 21, Nov. 16, 1971.) Similar vehicle crash performance has been repeatedly observed by NHTSA teams in studying real world crashes of various makes and models of vehicles.

Comments on the proposed rule should be submitted before July 1, 1974, to Docket 74-21, Docket Section, Room 5108, National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, 400 Seventh St., S.W., Washington, D.C. 20590.

VIN Program Evaluation Planned

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration plans to evaluate the effectiveness of a new rule that will provide third parties – such as insurers and consumer groups – and the public with vehicle identification numbers (VIN) of cars that have been recalled for checking and possible correction of safety defects, but not yet repaired.

General Motors and Chrysler Corp. had asked for the evaluation in formal petitions for reconsideration. GM suggested that NHTSA "maintain a public record of requests made for VIN information so that future consideration can be given to the extent such data is useful and to whom."

Under the safety defect provisions of the National Traffic and Motor Vehicle Safety Act of 1966, manufacturers must notify motor vehicle owners of safety defects discovered in their cars. (Often the manufacturers recall such defective vehicles for correction at the manufacturer's expense.) Although manufacturer records contain the names of original owners of such vehicles, they ordinarily do not identify subsequent owners.

When NHTSA issued the rule (Docket 69-31) earlier this year, it said, "... the vehicle identification number is a useful tool for locating second and later owners of vehicles." The agency pointed

out that a study conducted jointly by State Farm Mutual Automobile Insurance Co. and Ford Motor Co. showed that "a fairly significant percentage of owners who either had not received or responded to the initial [defect campaign] notification mailed by the manufacturer did respond to subsequent letters" that were sent as part of the joint study. (See *Status Report*, Vol. 9, No. 8, April 16, 1974.)

The agency granted requests from the two auto makers that reports not be required until the third quarter after a notification is initiated. The agency had originally required that auto makers submit reports after the second quarter. The auto makers claimed that that time period was too short.

In issuing the reporting requirement changes, the agency clarified that the requirements only cover defect notification campaigns initiated after Jan. 1, 1974. Earlier, *Status Report* noted that the agency had been unclear as to what campaigns would be subject to the requirement.

The agency denied Chrysler's request that the reporting requirements be dropped altogether.

NTSB Recommends Improved Bridges, Buses

The National Transportation Safety Board has issued a series of recommendations urging the Federal Highway Administration to improve bridge structures and approaches and the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration to provide occupant protection in school buses.

The NTSB made its recommendations in a report on a collision involving a cattle truck and a school bus on a narrow bridge approach near Fort Sumner, N.M., Dec. 26, 1972. Nineteen school bus occupants, including the driver, were killed. Sixteen other bus passengers and the truck driver, that vehicle's sole occupant, were injured.

The collision took place when the driver of the tractor-semitrailer struck a bridge end-post and jackknifed into the path of the on-coming bus. NTSB found that "properly placed signs and adequate pavement markings could have directed the truck driver safely across the bridge."

NTSB recommended that FHWA:

- develop a traffic control system to assist drivers "in remaining in the intended pathway at narrow highway structures;"
- require states to bring bridge approach guardrails into compliance with federal recommendations;
- eliminate curbs on new bridges and correct hazardous curbs on existing bridges, and
- develop "minimum performance criteria" for crash cushions.

The Safety Board recommended that NHTSA:

- require, in rulemaking now underway, increased strength of bus seat anchorages and "more protection against gross seat deflection which can permit seats to be carried away," and
- identify and report to bus owners types of anchorages which would be substantially stronger with "such simple changes as substituting a bolt for a sheet metal screw."

In a separate action, the House Commerce Committee on May 30 reported out a bill (HR 5529) that would mandate a federal school bus safety standard to include provisions dealing with floor strength, seating systems, crashworthiness of bodies and frames, and other occupant protection provisions. The bill would require the Department of Transportation to issue such a standard to be effective within 15 months after enactment. The bill faces House vote as well as action in House-Senate conference. (See story on page 8.)

Puerto Rico Gets Safety Belt Law Grant

Puerto Rico has received a special "incentive grant" of almost \$300,000 from the Department of Transportation for being the first U.S. jurisdiction to enact safety belt usage legislation.

Such grants were mandated by the 1973 Highway Safety Act. It provides for incentive grants for states or jurisdictions passing DOT approved safety belt legislation. The amount of a state's grant may be equal to either 10, 15 or 25 per cent of its funds under the 1966 Highway Safety Act depending upon how many of the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration criteria are met. (See *Status Report* Vol. 9, No. 9, May 1, 1974.) Puerto Rico's grant is 25 per cent since its law requires use of all available belts, including shoulder belts by all front and rear seat occupants.

Correction

Status Report, Vol. 9, No. 10, (May 15, 1974), carried an article on the Highway Loss Data Institute's report on initial 1974 model results. The last two sentences on page four incorrectly described the data in the accompanying table. It should have read as follows:

"When the 1974 model results for all makes and series are considered together, the claim frequency was 9.6 claims per 100 insured vehicle years. The average loss payment per claim was \$495 and the average loss payment per insured vehicle year was \$48." Data in the chart accompanying that story were correct.

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the highway
loss reduction

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